

Modest inn brims with north country hospitality

By Kathleen Burge and Rich Barlow
 GLOBE STAFF AND GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WHITEFIELD, N.H. — En route to the Spalding Inn in New Hampshire's far-north White Mountains, the peaks and trees aren't the only signs of the rugged, sometimes challenging life in this rural tract. We drive by businesses with names like Affordable Forklift and mottoes like the one for Burns Insurance: "Insure with Burns before it burns."

The vicissitudes of outpost living show themselves at various points once we arrive. On one night of our three-night stay, we dine at Whitefield's Woodburn House, a place of many pluses (delicious nachos, eclectic menu, friendly waiter) that's having a bad night (the crab cakes are lousy; they're out of milk and orange juice, though a runner kindly goes out to buy the latter for our toddler; and the man sent to find a high chair can't, though one is in plain view near the salad bar).

The Spalding, which overall we recommend with enthusiasm, is contending with deficiencies during this Fourth of July week. Two netless tennis courts lie unavailable, recent rainfall having delayed prep work on the clay. Innkeeper Walt Loope, 54, tells us that the swimming pool, which is supposed to open in July, is also incapacitated and empty, awaiting repairs to the town water system.

Lying in the shadow of the Mountain View Grand Resort and Spa, a gorgeous, corporate-owned, Gilded Era grand hotel just down the road, the Spalding is decidedly modest, and it's truly a family business. Loope serves us breakfast one morning, and his wife, Dona, 54, can be seen frequently working on the landscaping. Loope's German daughter-in-law waits on us at dinner and one breakfast during our three-night stay, a time when the inn is still struggling to get ready for the season.

Our cottage has four rooms: an ample living room-cum-dining area outfitted with a small table and four chairs; a good-sized bedroom with king bed; a bathroom; and a tiny kitchenette, a boon for the budget-conscious willing to do some cooking. The living room has a fireplace, though it must be for crisp fall nights, as the Spalding is closed in the winter. The

rooms are clean and simple; the wall-to-wall carpet in the living room has a few stains.

Rooms in the 24-room main house across the road have the manicured look and feel of a bed-and-breakfast. The place brims with amenities. For travelers with wee ones, there's a toy room, with a wooden train and track that proved a helpful distraction for our son. Downstairs, two spacious game rooms have a wide-screen TV, and ping-pong and pool tables.

It's the people behind the Spalding who make the place glitter. We get a taste of hospitality from Loope, who hails from Virginia, immediately on arrival, when he alerts us to the advertised-but-unavailable pool, calls a nearby competitor with an indoor pool, confirms that they have an open room, and says he will understand if we prefer to go there instead.

Declining that offer, we accept another: dinner for just the three of us in the Spalding's restaurant, La Trattoria, two nights ahead of its scheduled opening. The Spalding has a new chef, Paul Green III, who has remade the menu, and we are the test run. His vegetarian specialty — a medley of veggies and hummus sandwiched in a portobello stack, paired with polenta and zucchini sides, all in a carrot-and-ginger-soup sauce — would convert the most ardent carnivore. A chicken with India-inspired sauce, accompanied by spaghetti and vegetables, wows our meat-eater. Green isn't responsible for the complimentary breakfasts each morning, but those are wonderful, too.

The dining room window looks out across the inn's crescent driveway to the peaks of the Presidential Range in the distance.

We spend part of one day at Cannon Mountain. At 4,180 feet in elevation, it's not the tallest of the Whites, but you won't complain as you ride the tram car to and from the summit. The roadway traffic at the foot of the mountain rapidly shrinks to an ant trail on the ride up, and on the ride down, staring at the drop, you hope you remembered to sign your will. Atop the mountain are a cafeteria with decent sandwiches, cold drinks, and ice cream, and walking trails with spectacular views.

The north country is also known for its



swimming spots, and after coming off Cannon, you can rest at its foot on the beach at Echo Lake, watching the tram cars climb up and down the slope.

Rural life has its challenges, but like the personable staff at the Spalding, it beckons a city-dweller.

Kathleen Burge can be reached at kburge@globe.com; Rich Barlow at barlow81@gmail.com.



The Spalding Inn

199 Mountain View Road
Whitefield, N.H.
603-837-2572, 800-368-8439
spaldinginn.com

What we liked best: The delicious food and the kids room to divert our toddler.

What we liked least: The heating system. Though it was July, it was unseasonably cool, and the heat was erratic.

What surprised us: The scope and comfort of the game rooms: wide-screen TV, ping-pong and pool tables, foosball, and enough board games and books to keep you down there your entire stay.

You know you're at the Spalding Inn when . . . Jake, the innkeepers' elderly dog, greets you from behind the front desk.

Rates: Through Oct. 15, at the main lodge \$145 per night single room, \$238 two-room suite; cottages \$199-\$598 for one to four bedrooms; carriage house \$159 single, \$285 two-room suite, \$405 three-room suite.

Directions: Whitefield, N.H., is about 180 miles or more than three hours from Boston. Take Interstate 93 north through the White Mountains to exit 35 (Twin Mountain/Lancaster) and Route 3. Stay on Route 3 for about 19 miles; take a slight right to stay on Route 3 (Lancaster Road/Daniel Webster Highway) for about 2 miles. Turn right onto Mountain View Road. The inn is on the left.



CHECK OUT ALL THE INNS

Browse a state-by-state archive at explorenewengland.com.



The Spalding Inn's main building has 24 rooms; a separate guest cottage has an ample living room and dining area.